AFRICSIS

Focus on the partnership between AFRICSIS and NRPA

The African continent faces a plethora of non-conventional and international security threats and risks. They include CBRNe ID² terrorism, cyber-attacks, climate change, and nuclear technology proliferation. The zenith of their implications during the last decade have significantly challenged the very concept of national security, stymied economic growth, and menaced regional stability. Therefore, the 21st century security environment is increasingly complex, scientific, and technical in nature. To that end, African governments are increasingly turning to a diverse toolbox of capabilities such as expertise and partnerships to devise innovative and effective solutions for non-conventional security threats. Part of these capabilities come from the important work done by research institutions, government entities, and multilateral organizations.

The African Centre for Science and International Security (AFRICSIS) is just one such institution. Established in 2012, AFRICSIS is a premier regional interdisciplinary think tank established in Ghana under the Companies Act 163 (179) as an international Non-Governmental Organization (Registration No. D.S.W./ 5985). Launched in 2013, AFRICSIS envisions a safer, more secured, and more stable Africa that is obtaining optimum benefits from dual-use science and technology in fields including nuclear energy, radioactive sources, and satellite applications to improve citizens' wellbeing and achieve economic prosperity. Mission wise, AFRICSIS is dedicated to providing rigorous-objective research, evidenced-based analysis, and practical policy recommendations that are essential to devise innovative and effective solutions for national and international security issues at the crossroad of science and technology.

Launching ceremony of AFRICSIS in Accra on 24 May 2013. (Credits: AFRICSIS). From L-R: Mr. Hubert Foy (AFRICSIS Director), Maj. (Dr) Mustapha Ahmed (Minister of State (in Charge of Development Authorities, Office of the President of Ghana), Dr. Mohammed Alpha (Deputy
Minister, Ministry of Environment, Science, Technology and Innovation, Ghana – Event Keynote Speaker), Prof. John Humphreys Amuasi (Event Chair), Prof. B. B. Nyarko (Director General of Ghana Atomic Energy Commission), Prof. Cyril Schandorf (AFRICISIS Board Chair).

A major aim of AFRICISIS is to enhance policymakers, the public, the media, and the next generation of African leaders to better understand security threats connected to dual-use science and technology. Another goal is to contribute to international efforts towards strengthening nuclear security and minimizing radiological terrorist threats in Africa. One major object is publishing and disseminating independent policy-oriented technical research on Africa’s security challenges; addressing the strategic dimensions and changing patterns of global security threats. Another object is applying the expertise of its staff to important and urgent security problems that require solid technical and scientific data and analyses and making its results available to policy-makers, the press, and the public.

AFRICISIS now partners with African states, western governments, and international organizations through research, training, and networking to build strategic capacity that enhance the peaceful application of dual-use science and technology in the continent. Within Africa, AFRICISIS has operational partnerships with Ghana (since 2013) and Cameroon (since 2015) that provide infrastructure, technical, and administrative support. In Ghana, Ghana Atomic Energy Commission in Accra that host AFRICISIS headquarters implements the partnership arrangement. In Cameroon, National Radiation Protection Agency in Yaoundé that hosts another operational office of AFRICISIS implements the partnership arrangement. Outside Africa, one major partner of AFRICISIS is the Partnership for Nuclear Security (PNS) at the U.S. Department of States (DoS) to promote a self-sufficient nuclear security culture by engaging nuclear experts and fostering an international dialogue about nuclear security best practices.

AFRICISIS-NRPA signing ceremony and exchange of MoU in Accra on 3 August 2015 – (Credits: Brunelle Batistella, WINS Academy). From L-R: Mr. Hubert Foy (Director of AFRICISIS and signing for AFRICISIS), Dr. Simo Augustin (Director General of National Radiation Protection Agency (NRPA) and signing for NRPA).

NRPA was established to undertake and realize the objectives of safe, secure and peaceful use of nuclear science and technology in Cameroon. Its mission is to protect people, property and environment against the harmful use of ionizing radiation. The Agency is responsible for, inter alia, propose standards for radiation protection; advise on application for exploration and extraction of uranium and thorium ores, in compliance with the provision of the Mining Code authorization; issue an opinion on the draft texts of a legislative character in radiation protection; regulate the use of all radiological materials; and organize training, acquire and disseminate information and documentation relating to radiation protection.

NRPA and AFRICISIS have common interests in promoting peaceful applications of nuclear energy for national development, strengthening nuclear non-proliferation agreements and nuclear security through research, education and outreach. Under this MoU, the organizations will work together in pursuing the highest quality standards in research and training in all subjects related to the development of manpower and the promotion of transparent practices in pursuing safe, secure and peaceful applications of nuclear science and technology in Cameroon. The Centre; thus, contributes to improving citizens’ wellbeing and advancing economic prosperity while ensuring a safer, more secured, and stable Africa.

AFRICISIS also works with the International Nuclear Safeguards Engagement Program (INSEP) at the U.S. Department of Energy’s National Nuclear Security Administration (DOE/NNSA), an integral part of DOE/NNSA’s Next Generation Safeguards Initiative (NGSI), a multiyear program launched in 2008 to develop the policies, concepts, technologies, expertise, and safeguards infrastructure necessary to strengthen and sustain
the international safeguards system as it evolves to meet new challenges. AFRICSIS further works with the U.K. Department of Energy and Climate Change to help develop capacity of representatives from nuclear regulatory authorities, atomic energy commissions, research and academic institutions, and foreign and defense ministries on nuclear security in Africa. Institutionally, AFRICSIS works with leading nonproliferation experts and nongovernmental organizations including the World Institute for Nuclear Security, Federation of American Scientists, Center for Nonproliferation Studies to support the United States President Barrack Obama’s vision of “securing all nuclear weapon material at vulnerable sites within four years”.

AFRICSIS is a member of international professional organizations including the United Nations Civil Society Organizations (CSO), United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), International Nuclear Security Education Network (INSEN) of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), and the Fissile Material Working Group (FMWG).

Overall, AFRICSIS-NRPA partnership is a mutually beneficial collaboration. Primarily, AFRICSIS and NRPA can develop joint educational modules in nuclear security culture, WMD non-proliferation, and counter CBRNe ID terrorism for students and professionals in national training institutions. The modules would add value to the capacity and effectiveness of diplomats and military officers in international fora related to non-conventional security. Next, the analysis and outreach conducted by AFRICSIS can create situational awareness among citizens about non-traditional threats confronting our nation and citizens’ role in enhancing government capacity to effectively combat them. Taken together, education and outreach can contribute to government’s security improvement and economic development objectives. Beyond political support, it is expected that the elements of government policy, practice, and support would foster a more conducive environment for positive AFRICSIS contribution to national security and economic prosperity.

Hubert Foy